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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NOUKKCHOTT 000514

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [MR](#)
SUBJECT: AZIZ' EW GOVERNMENT "NOT BAD"

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Classified By: Ambassador Mark M. Boulware for Reasons 1.4 (b and d)

1. (C) Summary: President elect Mohamed Ould AbdelAAziz appointed a new cabinet on August 11. Led by former Prime Minister Moulaye Ould Mohamed Lagha f, the cabinet has 29 positions (24 ministers, deputy ministers, 2 minister secretary generalsa nd one minister counselor). Aziz set a positiv note with the highest-ever percentage of non-White Moors and women in a Mauritanian government -- the appointments were significant both quantitatively and qualitatively since key senior positions typically occupied by male White Moors were given to women and blacks. On August 12, DCM organized a round table to gather senior Locally Employed Staff (LES) initial thoughts about the new government. LES concurred most of the ministers are individuals close to Aziz who played an important role in his presidential campaign. In many cases, they saw the appointments as rewards to key Aziz supporters -- naming the children (albeit qualified children) of traditional tribal leaders to key positions. LES divided the nominations in two categories -- the political appointees and the technocrats. The political appointees include Foreign Minister Naha Mint Mouknass, whose father was Foreign Minister under Taya and whose family has strong relationships with international figures such as Qadhafi and Ban Ki Moon. Mouknass is the first Mauritanian woman to serve in such an important position. The technocrats include Interior Minister Mohamed Ould Boilil, who knows the Ministry inside out and has been Wali on numerous occasions. LES agreed the government is mostly composed of new faces; people who had not been ministers before, which is consistent with Aziz's promise to renew the political class. Nevertheless, LES stated this was only true on the surface as many of those appointed have close family ties to the old political and military guard. LES highlighted Aziz did not appoint any Ouled Bisbaa tribesmen nor members of his rival tribe, the Smasside, who supported opposition leader Ahmed Ould Daddah. Only one Idawalli was appointed whereas in the past this tribe was widely represented in the government. Idawalli supported Messaoud Ould Boulkheir. For many LES, this is only a transitional government and they expect to see a new one appointed in the next two years, particularly as Aziz's party UPR becomes stronger. End summary.

12. (C) LAGHDAF REAPPOINTED: LES were not surprised at Aziz' decision to rename Prime Minister Laghdaf, who served as Prime Minister following the August 6 coup d'etat and

through the post coup period, including during the post-Dakar Transitional Government of National Unity. Rumor has it that Laghdaf is a self-effacing personality and lacks political ambition -- personality traits that are consistent with Aziz's penchant for running the show and wanting to do everybody's job. LES agreed they expect to see a strong Aziz presidency at the expense of the Prime Minister. Nevertheless, LES pointed out that Laghdaf's influence over Aziz should not be underestimated as he was one of the few individuals to have direct access to the General and he has also been very efficient in coordinating the government's program during the difficult political and financial circumstances following the coup.

13. (C) WOMEN AND AFRO-MAURITANIANS REPRESENTED: While the government is predominantly composed of White Moors (68%), the percentage of Afro-Mauritanians is high in comparison with previous governments. The government also includes women in higher proportions than in the past (17 percent) and, the first woman to serve as Foreign Minister. Black Moor representation is limited with only two appointed (6 percent). Although a significant improvement from previous governments, the rate of Afro-Mauritanians and Black Moors is still far from representing the population's true composition with Black Moors in particular being under-represented.

14. (C) REWARDS: Several of those appointed are close Aziz supporters or were instrumental in his campaign. Those who are particularly close to Aziz include Minister Secretary General to the Presidency Sy Adama, Minister Counselor to the Presidency Messaouda Mint Baham and Minister of Public Function Coumba Ba.

* Missing Section 002 *

* Missing Section 003 *
